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ABSTRACT

Schools can play an important part in helping diverse young people see themselves as citizens. This paper examines a broad range of school-based learning opportunities that influence young people's development of knowledge and inclinations for handling conflict. The ingredients for conflict resolution can be taught. Like violence, nonviolence is a learned behavior. As public concern over violence increases, school leaders often respond with what has been called "negative peacemaking," the premature use of bargaining or settlement procedures before underlying problems have been solved or understood. The goal is avoidance, not problem solving. In contrast, "positive liberty" procedures involve the presence of active democratic participation. These alternative emphases in education for citizenship are the conceptual framework for reviewing the research on a range of school-based conflict resolution training programs to examine the relative space given to negative peacemaking and positive liberty in school practices. Violence prevention and anti-bullying programs generally involve narrowly focused training in social skills and anger management. Many of these interventions single out particular populations, disproportionately ethnic minority males, considered to be "at-risk." School peer conflict resolution programs are popular, and, if properly presented, can move beyond negative peacemaking to broaden the positive liberty students experience. Making student governance activities relevant gives students the opportunity to engage in democratic decision making and helps develop an understanding of conflict and its resolution. Conflict resolution may be taught explicitly. Controversial subject matter may be damaging to some students without careful attention to inclusive and respectful instructional processes, but the inclusion of controversial and conflictual questions can bring previously silenced young people into pedagogical conversations. Conflict resolution can easily be infused into literature, mathematics, and science classes as well as the social studies area to which it has been traditionally assigned. Important opportunities for long-term conflict management learning exist in the everyday processes of a school community. If students have positive liberty, they can develop the skills they need to participate in the nonviolent management of conflict as citizens. (Contains 131 references.) (SLD)

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by
Kathy Bickmore

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Teaching Conflict and Conflict Resolution in School:
(Extra-) Curricular Considerations

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> *The power of democracy rests in its capacity to transform the individual as teacher, trader, corporate executive, child, sibling, worker, artist, friend or mother into a special sort of political being, a citizen among citizens.*
> *(Dietz 1989, p.14)*

As young people develop and learn about the intersecting social systems of which they are a part, conflict is all around them. Inescapably as children grow, they develop understandings about interpersonal and social conflict, about procedures for handling it, and about the violence and war that may emerge when conflicts are not resolved. In school, official curricula guide children's and adolescents' development of understanding about war, conflict and peace. At least as powerfully, young people also learn about conflict from the implicit curricula of student activities, teacher and peer responses to political events, school governance, and discipline practices. This chapter discusses the school factors that influence young people's developing understandings of war, conflict, and peace.

Two concerns motivate this research: first, the apparent inescapability of individual and group violence (resulting in children's entanglement as bystanders, victims, and perpetrators of wartime and 'peacetime' injury — Merelman 1990, Prothrow-Stith 1994), and second, the spread of apathy and political cynicism (resulting in low citizen involvement in democratic activities — Klaassen 1996, Lasch 1995). These are really the twin horns of one dilemma: young citizens in many countries seem to be less involved in the various institutionalized processes that are designed to manage social conflict, while they are increasingly involved in the violence that is a consequence of such conflict's escalation. Ironically, many

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young people are involved in violent activity, without necessarily understanding themselves as social actors who make choices that influence the course of that activity. Peace seems to many like an abstraction, while war and violent conflict carry vivid images into every developing mind. Children often don't understand peace as a *dynamic* equilibrium that depends on citizens' participation in (learned) *processes* for handling conflict.

Schools can play an important part in handling this dilemma, by helping diverse young people to "see themselves in the definition of citizen" (Adler 1994, p.35), and therefore to internalize skills, norms, and roles for managing personal and social conflict. Clearly educators do not agree on the importance of such citizenship education for peace, never mind on how to do it. Powerful absences and silences in school activities leave certain matters unquestioned, leave certain citizens uninvolved and unheard. In this chapter, I examine a broad range of school-based learning opportunities that influence young people's development of knowledge and inclinations for handling conflict. I argue for the more systematic and careful inclusion of conflict education in school: if peace requires nonviolent management of conflict, then *education* for peace requires practice with conflict.

Conflict — perceived incompatible objectives between two or more people or groups — occurs in every social system. It is part of being alive. The evolution and successful management of a conflict depends upon:

- the parties' awareness of problems and potential solutions,
- the degree of interdependence (relationship) among the parties,
- the degree of equilibrium (balance and stability) among the parties, and
- the existence of predictable (understood) procedures for handling problems

(Deutsch 1973, Kriesberg 1982).

The ingredients for conflict resolution, in relation to each of these factors, can be taught. Like violence, nonviolence is learned behaviour. School classrooms and informal school activities are important settings in which children and youth develop:

- understandings of conflict and its consequences,
- skills in recognizing and nurturing healthy relationships with people like and unlike themselves,
- knowledge of (and capacity to navigate) the workings of power in social and

political systems, and
• skills and inclinations to use a broad repertoire of conflict resolution (peacemaking) processes (Deutsch 1993).

Paradoxically, peacemaking requires confronting conflict. Without carefully balanced opportunities to practice making informed decisions, particularly in public schools, the prevalent cultural models of social fragmentation, alienation, and violence are bound to carry tremendous weight in young people's socialization. In societies with contested political regimes, children may learn a great deal about managing conflict and violence, but meanwhile they may develop rigid, fearful notions of self and others that impede efforts at conflict resolution (Merelman 1990). In regimes that are largely peaceful or uncontested, children may learn to fear conflict and to regard dissenters as abnormal, thus undercutting positive possibilities for social integration and democratization. This paradox can put schools in an awkward position, because of the political nature of public education. However, the alternative to confronting conflict in school is to have young citizens learn about conflict idiosyncratically and accidentally, thus to allow the spiral of violence to persist.

How do schools teach about conflict and peace? As public concern over violence increases, school leaders often respond with what has been called *"negative peacemaking"* — the premature use of bargaining or settlement procedures, before underlying problems have been solved or understood (Curle & Dugan 1982, also Bettman & Moore 1994, Fennimore 1997). The goal of negative peacemaking is avoidance, not problem solving. For example, educators may take short-term safety measures emphasizing control, exclusion or segregation of disruptive students, and avoidance of sensitive topics. From these models, students may learn to hide their true feelings, to blame others for problems, and to censor uncomfortable topics or viewpoints. In contrast, feminist political science identifies *"positive liberty"* — procedures and encouragement for broad involvement in handling community concerns and conflicts — as a guiding principle of democracy (Dietz 1989). Positive liberty involves the practice of active democratic participation. For example, students are engaging in positive liberty when they learn:
• about conflict resolution by serving on a student government committee,
• about power and problem-solving by contributing to a service project,
• about peacemaking by serving as peer facilitators or conflict mediators,

• about analyzing multiple perspectives on public questions by studying problems of war, peace, or controversial issues.

With the good intention of protecting political neutrality and safety, public education — even education intended to teach conflict resolution — may be "coopted" by the "powerful logic" of hierarchical school management and thus reduced to mere "violence prevention" (Deutsch 1993).

The notions of negative peacemaking and positive liberty, as alternative emphases in education for citizenship, provide a conceptual framework for organizing this chapter. First, I will examine some prevailing practices in school discipline, in particular negative peacemaking efforts to minimize disruption and overt violence. Second, I will review the research on a range of school-based conflict resolution training programs, in order to examine the relative space that may be given to negative peacemaking and positive liberty in such efforts. Third, I will discuss a range of programs, including student governance and academic classroom work, that show promise for infusing positive liberty into school practices. In particular, I will focus on the infusion of controversial material and peace concerns into academic curriculum and instructional processes. I will conclude by assessing the possibilities for citizenship education for developing young people's understandings of conflict and.

School discipline and violence prevention

Discipline, the management of student behaviour, is at the heart of school-based socialization. Repeated modeling and consistent practice are powerful influences on learning (whether or not they are consciously planned): deeds speak more loudly than words. Thus the processes of developing and enforcing school rules, and of grouping and sorting students for the delivery of the explicit curriculum, are powerful contributors to young people's understandings of themselves as members of society (Clifton & Roberts 1993, Ingersoll 1996). Young citizens learn about conflict and violence by observing the ways conflictual or violent incidents are handled (and by whom), and by practicing and internalizing particular norms and roles in relation to conflict management. This implicit curriculum regarding conflict, violence, and peace varies widely from place to place, and from teacher to teacher. Educators wield different types and degrees of authority in relation to students and their conflicts — sometimes in ways that facilitate

students' development of their own autonomous strategies for handling conflict and preventing violence, and sometimes (unfortunately) in ways that insist upon dumb obedience.

> [While a young teacher of Portuguese] I began to see that the authority of the teacher is absolutely necessary for the development of the students, but if the authority of the teacher goes beyond the limits authority has to have in relation to the students' freedom, then we no longer have authority. We no longer have freedom. We have authoritarianism. (Freire, in Horton & Freire 1990, p. 61-62)

Classroom conflicts matter to students. Young people learn a great deal about conflict from the ways they (and their peers) are treated in school. Discipline practices sometimes ignore what educators know about good teaching — for example, the importance of clear explanations, positive feedback, and guided practice to help students improve skills (Schimmel 1997). This "negative peacemaking" undermines young people's opportunities to develop *self*-discipline and an understanding of democratic citizenship. If classroom rules are negative, restrictive, unexplained, or delivered in a rigid legalistic manner, then students may be provoked to subvert or ignore the teacher's goals, especially when not under direct surveillance. Thus students develop understandings of conflict and power that the teacher may not have intended. Furthermore, constructive resistance (for example, clarifying procedures, correcting misinformation, or assisting peers) is sometimes tarred with the same brush as other forms of perceived 'misbehaviour' (Kearney & Plax 1992). As a result, students may cease to think of such teachers as legitimate guides, or may internalize implicit values that marginalize conflict, blame particular individuals for confronting problems, or assume conflict must be managed by powerful authorities rather than by ordinary citizens.

Schools have custodial (control and safety) responsibilities, for which negative peacemaking is a necessary though not sufficient condition. However, they also carry humanistic (democratic and child development) responsibilities, for which positive liberty is essential (Larson 1991). Positive liberty (democratic) experiences in school can make a difference in students' capacity and willingness to engage in democratic citizenship activity, including conflict resolution (Hahn 1996, Hepburn 1983). Children learn to make decisions and to solve problems only by

participating in — practicing — making decisions and solving problems (Carlsson-Paige & Levin 1992, Kamii 1991). It's a matter of balance and inclusivity. It is possible for schools to protect students' safety, without asserting authoritarian control that would deny students opportunities to learn about positive conflict resolution and peacemaking.

It can be a challenge to broaden the range of student involvement in non-punitive learning opportunities so that democratic experiences are not limited to an elite group of students. Where students' liberty to participate in positive ways is curtailed, those students' opportunities to learn conflict resolution and peacemaking are thereby limited. School discipline policies often implicitly focus on males — especially minority males — because data on visible school violence, vandalism, and suspension highlight the involvement of these populations (Slee 1995). Lower-status and minority youth are disproportionately blamed and labelled 'difficult' by educators; they often suffer the most severe negative consequences of the negative peacemaking embodied in traditional discipline practices (Leal 1994). The kinds of student resistance that are less disruptive, such as absence from school or nonparticipation in activities, are more commonly associated with female students, and often ignored (Bergsgaard 1997, Slee 1995). Similarly, less-visible violence that contributes to girls' absence or alienation, such as sexual harassment, are often relatively ignored by school personnel (Stein 1995). In either case, certain students may be implicitly or explicitly denied positive liberty, i.e. excluded from the more autonomous democratic opportunities. Thus, these students learn different roles and skills for handling conflict, in comparison with their more privileged peers.

Violence prevention and anti-bullying programs generally involve narrowly-focused 'training' in social skills and anger management, supplemented by counseling, stricter punishment, physical plant remodelling, and/or increased staff monitoring/ reporting responsibilities (Pepler & Craig 1994, Smith & Sharp 1994). For example, many schools in North America have recently implemented so-called "zero tolerance" policies, built around negative peacemaking — blaming and excluding from school the identified 'perpetrators' of violence. Many of these interventions single out particular populations, disproportionately ethnic minority males, that are considered by educational leaders to be 'at risk' (Guliano 1994, Prothrow-Stith 1994). Critics point out that control-oriented and culturally imposed

violence prevention efforts may backfire, by reinforcing mutual distrust among members of school communities, thus escalating conflict and breeding additional resistance (Noguera 1995, Soriano et. al 1994). The unintended consequence of negative peacemaking programs may be to marginalize people who have engaged in violence, rather than to educate the broad population of students regarding nonviolent alternatives. Some violence prevention efforts do build in prejudice reduction lessons or problem-solving strategies (Greenberg 1995, Moore & Batiste 1994). However, when such programs are limited to the margins of schools, they are ill-prepared to address problems of social conflict or violence. This is the dilemma of negative peacemaking: it is understandable that school leaders would wish to put a lid on violence problems, but premature imposition of surface-level remedies can exacerbate underlying tensions and resolve nothing.

Peer Conflict Resolution Programs

School-based conflict resolution programs are spreading rapidly and persisting, in part because the public demands that school administrators 'do something' about school violence (Posner 1994). Many program participants strongly believe in the positive program effects they have experienced, whether or not there is firm evidence of those effects (Cameron & Dupuis 1991, Davis 1994, Lawton 1994). The strongest well-documented effects of peer conflict resolution programs have been, not surprisingly, on the most direct and frequent participants, especially the student leaders selected to be conflict managers (Bickmore 1997, Lam 1988, Shulman 1996). It has been difficult to substantiate the influences of these programs on whole school climates. Assessments that are simple to administer, for example surveys of attitudes toward interpersonal conflict, are hard to attribute to any one educational experience. Changes in rates of suspension for fighting (Koch 1988, Sticher 1986) can be attributed to many factors, including administrative policy, not merely to conflict resolution programs. Some of the most convincing assessments of student conflict resolution programs are tied closely to conflict resolution theory, for example showing how many peer conflicts were successfully resolved, how many integrative (win-win) rather than distributive (win-lose) settlements were proposed (to real or hypothetical scenarios), and/or to what degree particular skills and conflict management procedures are retained and used spontaneously (Johnson & Johnson 1996). The evidence indicates that intensive instruction and practice in conflict resolution processes can have a profoundly

positive effect on those with the positive liberty to participate directly and for a significant period of time.

Many of the earliest (and still common) school conflict resolution programs have been cadre peer mediation programs, in which a few students are identified and pulled out of regular classes for special conflict resolution training (see Hall's chapter, in this volume). Most such programs are based on the assumption that only students, not adults, need to learn conflict resolution skills. Typically, 20-30 students per school are pulled out of regular classes for 12-20 hours of skill-building workshops. Thus trained, the peer mediators assist their schoolmates to voluntarily negotiate resolutions to their own conflicts, generally following a prescribed series of steps. Often, peer mediators serve on the playground at recess or in special mediation areas during free periods. Some programs choose 'model' students (predominantly girls who are already doing well in school), to be mediators. This elite approach can limit the influence of a program and the willingness of many students to self-refer conflicts to mediation, compared to programs that choose a broader range of students who are identified as having both 'positive' and 'negative' leadership potential (Bickmore 1993b, Day-Vines 1996). In any case, the vast majority of students in these schools encounter alternative dispute resolution only as observers of an introductory presentation or as clients. Most school-based conflict education programs have not been sufficiently large, well-funded, or well-integrated into the business of schooling to offer such an experience to the majority of their students, much less to the adult members of these school communities.

Recently, there has been an increasing trend toward moving conflict resolution in from the extra-curricular margins. There are many examples of social skills and conflict resolution curriculum materials, designed to be used by teachers in regular classrooms (e.g. Bickmore et. al. 1984, Glass 1994, Opffer 1997). The goal has been to offer conflict resolution education to more students in each school, over a sustained period of time. These programs guide students to develop knowledge, inclinations, and skills in what might be called the 'basics' of conflict resolution, whether or not any students' roles are fundamentally changed to include negotiation or mediation of actual peer conflicts in school. One of the most venerable and influential of such programs, more than 20 years old and still flourishing, is the Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC) program (Prutzman et. al. 1978). CCRC's materials build student-centered activities around

four intersecting themes that build students' capacity for handling conflict: affirmation (appreciating oneself and others), communication (sending and interpreting verbal and nonverbal cues), cooperation (working and playing together to do things one could not do alone), and conflict resolution (involving a repertoire of skills for handling problems and creating win-win solutions). CCRC's more recent work adds a fifth theme, bias awareness, that intersects with all the others (Prutzman & Johnson 1997).

A contrasting program that infused conflict resolution into regular classroom activity was designed, based on cognitive development theory, and implemented in several Icelandic elementary classrooms (Adalbjarnadóttir 1992). This program emphasized "activating children's reasoning processes for the promotion of their social development" (p. 400). Teachers led groups of students through discussions, using open-ended questions, in order to model and have students practice cognitive strategies for autonomously working out problems. The students' abilities to generate solutions to various hypothetical dilemmas were assessed before and after the program. It was interesting that girls generally improved more in their reasoning about conflicts with peers, whereas boys, on average, improved most in reasoning about conflicts with the teacher. One possible explanation is that many boys received more of the teacher's attention: thus these assertive children had more practice, during the conflict resolution lessons, with the cognitive skills requiring self-confidence in dealing with authority. In common with a negative peacemaking emphasis, many conflict resolution education materials emphasize teaching students to be polite and non-disruptive, rather than assertive and active in handling conflict. On the other hand, conflict skills can be powerful tools for positive liberty, with which students become more able to solve their own problems and to express their interests in ways that can be effectively heard. A few conflict education programs (to be discussed in more detail below) begin to transcend the weight of school tradition and to broaden the positive liberty that provides students with opportunities to learn about conflict and peace.

Implicit curriculum about conflict: Involving diverse students school-based leadership

Conflict management and school governance are important aspects of the implicit curriculum that is embedded in the regular valuing and sanctioning of

particular behaviours. Young people learn from what they practice, for example from the responsibilities they fulfill in their schools and classrooms. They learn about interpersonal and social conflict from the roles they play (and are excluded from playing) in handling school community questions and problems. How do educators help diverse students to see themselves as potential actors, not merely pawns, in peacemaking and conflict resolution efforts?

> Violence prevention programming, safe and peaceful schools, and school reform are all issues that are discussed and debated without the students.... Yet, when there are successful programs that have embraced these young people, encouraged them, cried with them, and shared power with them, our educational institutions are slow to accept these models and respect the young people's knowledge and abilities. We must examine these attitudes and how they impact on the conflict resolution work we do.... it is imperative that we examine the issue of power, who has it, and how it is being used. (Close & Lechman 1997, p.11).

Student governance and student-led activities have been elements in many school programs for at least the last 50 years, but with widely fluctuating roles, scope, and purposes (Danielson 1989, Goodman 1992, Smith 1951). Adults in general, and educators in particular, are not necessarily disposed toward sharing power with young people. Some student governments embody educators' notions of 'good citizens' but involve little autonomous decision-making. For example, students may carry out classroom management tasks or community service projects (Cole & Proctor 1994, Fisher 1994, Heath & Vik 1994). The topics open for student input may range from marginalized special occasion planning to essential school policymaking (Howard & Kenny 1992, Mueller & Perris 1996). Only rarely do student organizations engage in comprehensive decision-making regarding significant school issues, giving careful attention to the inclusion of minority constituencies.

Students learn to manage increasingly complex conflict when their decisions carry tangible authority, for example the delegation of executive and judicial as well as legislative roles, or power to override an administrative veto or the opportunity for any student to participate without prior adult approval (Blight 1996, Dreyfuss 1990, Koskinen et. al. 1972). Young people may learn contradictory lessons about

conflict and dissent if their student newspapers, for example, are censored by administrators (Oettinger 1995). However, even limited forms of student leadership or governance, especially when these involve skilled facilitation by adult advocates, give participating students opportunities to develop understandings of conflict and peacemaking. For example, student leaders practice effective communication in groups, recognition of differing viewpoints, persuasion, identification of shared interests, and invention of problem-solving procedures (Hepburn 1983, Leatt 1987). In class or school community meetings, for example, students apply their concepts of justice to conflicts among their peers; "they practice creating the rules by which they want to live" (Angell 1996, p.24, also Sadowsky 1992).

In common with most adult political systems, student governance efforts persistently run into the challenges of inclusivity and unequal status. As in national politics, it is common to view the non-involvement of some individuals as evidence of 'apathy,' rather than as evidence of an implicitly exclusionary system (Keith 1971). People tend to get involved in activities that embody the concerns they feel are important. The population of leaders, and the topics they choose (and are guided) to take on, thus influences who will be interested in becoming involved in those peer leadership activities. Just as young people are sometimes chosen to be peer mediators because teachers see them as 'good' students, a large proportion of young people are commonly excluded from student councils on the basis of lower than average grades (Keith 1971, Koskinen et. al. 1972). Girls and other lower-status students may have little representation in student governance if they have more limited opportunities than their peers to develop prerequisite skills and self-confidence in informal settings; compensatory leadership training can reduce such barriers (Stiles 1986). Bringing student governance activities into the mainstream of school life, for example making them part of classroom activity or scheduling governance meetings into regular slots during the school day, gives proportionately more students the opportunity to participate in democratic decision-making, and thus in developing an understanding of conflict and its resolution.

In earlier generations, young people often did carry significant responsibilities for handling problems, simply because of the ways their communities were organized. Now, many youth have the luxury of remaining children (carrying little responsibility) for many years (Conrad & Hedin 1977, Postman 1982). To help young people learn to manage the conflicts of citizenship, educators create new avenues for

practicing meaningful participation in the postmodern world. Every-day life outside of school, especially in socially and politically marginallized communities, is unlikely to apprentice young people naturally into conflict management and democratic leadership roles. Therefore, some schools are creating opportunities for students to practice with many types of participation — including social involvement such as recycling or peer mediation, direct service such as helping in hospitals or soup kitchens, advocacy such as persuading local governments to change toxic dumping regulations, or electoral participation such as analyzing the positions of candidates for school board (Avery 1994).

Explicit curriculum about conflict: Pedagogies and subject-matter for active participation

The unknown, the controversial, and the problematic are the fuel for good conversation and the sparks that motivate inquiry for learning (Britzman 1992, Graff 1992, hooks 1994). Critical thinking (conflict management) skills cannot be developed without critique. Democracy and peacemaking depend on citizens' development of capacity and respect for independent critical thought. To facilitate conflict management, socialization — toward existing roles, rules and customs — is balanced with 'countersocialization' — toward questioning and creating alternatives (Engle & Ochoa 1988). Avoidance of conflict, in contrast, distances curriculum from life, rendering it meaningless.

Conflict education may be infused directly into academic lessons. For example, students analyze and respond to the conflicts in stories as part of literature/ language lessons, or they learn processes for managing broader political questions, war, and controversial issues in social studies classes (Angell & Hahn 1996, Bickmore 1993a, Easley 1993, Stevahn et. al. 1996). Conflict education involves the process of learning as much as the content. Cooperative small-group learning methods, for example, have gained currency in many schools: cooperation requres interaction and student initiative, thus such pedagogies provoke conflict and enable students to practice problem solving and conflict resolution (e.g. Cohen 1994). Conflict resolution, equity strategies, and problem-solving processes may be practiced in class meetings, student government, and teachers' professional interactions, as well as academic subject-matter and discipline practices (Fine 1997, Lantieri 1996, Opffer 1997). Comprehensive infusion of cooperation and conflict

resolution into *both* school processes *and* core curriculum is more likely to yield significant and lasting learning, compared with more limited interventions (Deutsch 1993, Johnson & Johnson 1996).

Apparently-inclusive curriculum may be implicitly exclusionary, if by avoiding conflict it marginalizes some viewpoints and molds others into simplified 'correct' answers (Foster 1996). For example, including a few women's names in a history book, without really examining their points of view in contrast to those of the military and political leaders (around whom the narrative is organized), serves to further trivialize the significance of their work. In particular, leaving women's perspectives out of history leaves certain human endeavors, such as peacemaking, unrecognized (Noddings 1992). Confronting conflicting perspectives in school provides students with opportunities to learn strategies for handling conflict and for avoiding violence in their lives (Soley 1996). Open discussion of controversial issues and problems in the classroom has been shown to help students develop interest in the social and political world, their capacity for reflective analytical and evaluative thinking, and their sense of efficacy as actors in their own lives (Hahn 1996, Harwood 1992, Mellor 1996).

Controversial subject-matter may be damaging to some students, as well as ineffective, without careful attention to inclusive and respectful instructional processes. Classroom climates that are closed to dissent, or that assign passive roles to students, can have a decidedly negative effect on young people's willingness and capacity to engage in further discussion regarding social and political issues (Ehman 1969). Young people need a balance between 'dissonance' (conflict that stimulates cognitive development) and 'emotional safety' (negative peacemaking that enables them to learn in a given environment (Houser 1996). This balance is often skewed, especially in elementary classrooms: if educators emphasize safety at all costs, they may create a comfortable but unstimulating environment that ironically slows down or narrows students' learning.

Introduction of conflictual questions can bring previously silenced young people into the pedagogical conversation, giving them the means, the opportunity, and the motivation to learn. For example, a grade 7-8 social studies/ English class practiced research methods by conducting an observational study, to see whether boys talked or interrupted more than girls in other classrooms in their school. It

was interesting that the students found wide variations among classrooms, but what was tremendous was the impact of having opened this question at all.

> The effect on the girls of actually conducting this study was immeasurable. They spoke up passionately throughout our discussions — some for the first time. (Schur 1995, p.147)

On the other hand, there is perhaps no such thing as a climate that is equally open and safe for all members of the class. Participants' diverse histories, relationships, and prior knowledge affect the degree to which they feel safe and respected, even in an apparently-open classroom climate (Ellsworth 1989). Paradoxically, opening the floor to diverse viewpoints can include some students and at the same time silence others (Bickmore 1993a). There is considerable planning and listening involved in facilitating the human processes that make openness real for the widest possible variety of students (Kreidler 1990, Rossi 1996).

A few examples, of various ways conflict (resolution) may be used as a learning opportunity in academic lessons, will serve to clarify matters. Perhaps the most common way teachers present conflict as a learning opportunity is by initiating debates. These are no doubt motivating, especially for the highest-status and most aggressive students, but it takes considerable planning to make debates a real opportunity for a wide range of students to really learn to manage social conflict. If debates are organized around thoughtful preparation and mutual response, not simply winning, students who participate actively may learn to listen for big ideas and points of view, to respect opposing opinions, and to communicate persuasively. For example, an integrated social studies and language arts "Debating Society" program in an Ontario public school focuses on controversial events in Canadian society (McGeown 1995). In this program, high school students lead preparatory discussions with younger students (grades 3-8), so that all have opportunities to participate and to develop understanding over time. In order for students to learn the component skills and understandings for integrative rather than competitive management of conflict, lessons that begin with debate may require students to switch roles, and eventually to negotiate a mutually-acceptable solution (see Avery, Johnson, Johnson & Mitchell chapter in this volume).

A way to handle conflictual topics that is more oriented toward broad

participation and conflict *resolution* is the simulation activity. This strategy can encourage students to develop a more complex understanding of war and its costs, as well as to handle more locallized problem solving or peacemaking. For example, students may play the roles of historically-grounded characters, for example making decisions regarding Canada's role in the conflict that became the deadly World War II battle of Dieppe (Morton 1986). Alternatively, students may role play members of various interest groups in relation to environmental management conflicts, involving control and use of resources, or choices in energy development (Borad & Fagerstrom 1985, Curow 1985). Simulation activities typically highlight the *interdependent* relationships among the conflicting parties, thus students practice cooperation and the creation of integrative solutions more than simply winning or losing. Social studies lessons may also introduce students to the workings of global and local institutions designed to prevent violence and its causes, such as non-governmental organizations or the United Nations (Boulding 1988, Casburn 1994).

Since conflict resolution requires communication skills, language and literature classes are natural places for conflict education. Conflict is intrinsically interesting, thus it gives students reasons to talk and read together, whether in a first or a second language (Iino 1994). For example, many children's books highlight questions of conflict and its consequences. Some young people's literature provides insight into concepts of justice and practice in understanding the perspectives of others (Gallagher 1988, Luke & Myers 1994). Literature that touches upon unresolved human conflicts and unpopular viewpoints risks provoking fear and even calls for censorship. However, if a teacher has a clear rationale to explain why the risks are worthwhile (i.e. what students are expected to learn) and how diverse students with minority views will be protected, then such lessons can be defended and strengthened (Herzog 1994, Worthington 1985). Students also can *create* texts that handle conflict. For example, a summer literacy program guided adolescents to develop persuasion skills. The students produced a public document, addressed to peers, that used sounder arguments than existing literature regarding the dangers of drugs (Long et. al. 1995). Opportunities for managing conflict can stimulate the development of language, and language skills development is essential for nonviolent conflict resolution.

Conflict and its resolution are also important to good mathematical and scientific education. Peer disagreement can help students to articulate their

understandings, to clarify underlying concepts, and sometimes to translate ideas into language that helps peers to understand (Crumbaugh 1996). Furthermore, application of math or science to real-life problems (in which there are inevitably disagreements) may help young people to take a measure of control over some of the powerful influences in their lives.

> Both the (apparent) complexities of technology and the (superficially) wonderful concrete changes it has made in daily life, from washing machines to word processors, convince people that control over our high-tech society must be left to 'experts.' Critical education in the United States, therefore, must counter this belief by showing people that they can understand how technology works, and in whose interest. (Frankenstein 1987, p. 185)

Application of science and technology to 'real life' connects it with the social context and the social studies, as for example when students examine legal cases involving conflicts over fundamental scientific beliefs (Morishita 1991). Another approach, in keeping with the work of adult scientists, is to engage students in testing alternative theories for explaining physical phenomena — either as these theories have evolved in the history of science or inductively, based on concrete experimentation and observation (Settlage & Sabik 1997). Any human endeavor worth learning about involves some conflict.

Oddly enough, one of the more controversial matters to teach about is peace, especially if this involves examining the causes and consequences of particular episodes of political violence. The careful examination of "human-initiated, catastrophic events whose legacy we still live" can help young people to understand the dangers of thoughtlessness and to develop understandings that can be applied to preventing future injustices (Eppert et. al. 1996 p.19, also Avery et. al. 1997, Strom et. al. 1992 Wegner 1995). Peace education involves connecting the interpersonal to the cross-cultural and international, in order to develop transferable (useable) understandings regarding the management of conflict (Harris 1996, Hicks 1988, Tabachnick 1990). A few critics have argued that "multiple loyalties" to nation and world, inherent in a global perspective, are unworkable (Fullinwider 1994). However, loyalty without understanding would fly in the face of democracy and social development, especially in this postmodern era of divided communities and

particularistic loyalties.

Value-laden international material is particularly well-suited to helping students develop their capacity for flexible and independent thought, because it highlights and demystifies multiple perspectives (Bottery 1992, Merryfield & Remy 1995). ... connect school learning to the political realities in which students find themselves... (Merelman 1990). Problem-posing and peace education extend to students the positive liberty to engage in handling social conflict, first by developing awareness of particular instances of conflict and second by learning and creating mechanisms for developing balanced and peaceful social relationships, thus countering the primary causes of violence (Curle & Dugan 1982).

Conclusion

It is tempting to respond to educational problems with quick fixes, and thus to respond to the social problem of violence with 'negative peacemaking' strategies that put the lid on the symptoms of the problem. If we were content to live under dictatorship, perhaps it would suffice to prevent overtly violent behaviour by means of coercion and manipulation. However, stable peace and democratic development require a more open approach to education. Short-run problem-reduction strategies tend to enhance hierarchical control and breed dependence, without enhancing students' capacities to resolve problems autonomously. Many important opportunities for long-term conflict management learning exist, not when people are hurt and angry (whether in wars or schoolyard scuffles), but in the every-day process of learning and living in a school community. Paradoxically, this means that just at the times when conflict *can* be avoided in school, it often *shouldn't* be. If students have the positive liberty to practice managing conflict in the protected environments of their schools, then they will develop the skills and understandings to participate in the nonviolent management of conflict as citizens.

The pursuit of peace and justice is not embodied in any particular piece of curricular or extra-curricular program. Instead, every realm of school life is involved in teaching young people about war and violence, conflict and peace. Behaviour management patterns and core academic curriculum, by virtue of being most of what happens in school, are the most pervasive organizers of student learning about conflict, and also the most difficult to change. Smaller-scale and pilot

programs in conflict resolution education provide spaces for innovation and experimentation, in the hope that these will eventually influence the core subject-matter and the regularized processes of schooling.

What is getting in the way of systemic implementation of positive liberty in schools, and the consequent development of students' capacities for nonviolent peacemaking? Beliefs about which relational processes and knowledge count as 'real school' are deeply embedded in the norms of our cultures (Metz 1990). Deeply-entrenched habits of schooling reinforce avoidance of conflict rather than developing students' awareness of problems and solutions, sorting and ethnocentric/ nationalist content rather than understanding of human relationships and interdependence, cabrupt curbing of controversy or student resistance rather than fostering students' capacity to understand and navigate the realms of power and inequality, and short-term efficiency and safety rather than the messy business of helping students to develop autonomous skills in conflict resolution or peacemaking processes. Furthermore, the bureaucracies that run many public schools have elevated standardization, summative assessment, and replicability to the status of sacred principles: the indirect, student-centred, and context-bound nature of the kinds of education that nurture peace and democracy sit awkwardly in the prevailing organization of schools (Kahne 1996). Perhaps true peace education cannot be mandated or fully tested, at least in a package that would work in any local cultural and political context.

However, the same forces of alienation and violence that make peace and conflict education necessary are also challenging these old realities of schooling. It is not merely that schools *should* not limit students' liberty to practice managing conflict; schools demonstrably *can* not and *will* not go on as they have in the past. The world is simply changing too fast: to their credit) students are already actively resisting the old order (Elkind 1995). As necessity is the mother of invention, the efforts to broaden students' conflict education opportunities are likely to persist and to multiply.

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